



european union

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NORWEGIANS VOTE AGAINST JOINING EUROPEAN UNION

A clear majority of Norwegians voted against joining the European Union in Norway's November 27-28 referendum on EU membership.

According to the last available results (which do not include some 100,000 absentee ballots still being counted), 52.5 percent of Norwegians voted against and 47.5 percent voted for EU membership. Voter turnout was high at 88.5 percent of all eligible voters.

European Commission President Jacques Delors told a press conference in Brussels today that he was disappointed, but "fully respected the outcome in a country which has always shown a great democratic sense". He explained that Norway will remain in the European Economic Area (EEA) which since 1993 has linked Austria, Finland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Sweden and Iceland to the EU's single market. Austria, Finland and Sweden are moving to EU membership in 1995 following positive referenda in those countries.

External Political Relations Commissioner Hans van den Broek, who negotiated the enlargement treaty with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden, said "the "no" vote did not come as a complete surprise." He added that "the treaty of accession foresees the event that not all four members with whom we negotiated would pass the referendum positively. This means that the adjustments needed are of a technical nature and that the accession process for the other countries need not be delayed."

Commissioner van den Broek added: "Our relations with Norway have a long tradition, in the economic field of course, through EFTA (European Free Trade Association) and the EEA. But I also think of our contacts in the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), the UN and NATO. These are all things that will continue and remain an important part of our cooperation. We regret, however, that Norway will not be directly implied in the decision making and deliberations on the future construction of the European Union where, I am certain, Norway would have given a very positive contribution."

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